

National Transportation Safety Board
Washington, DC 20594

Brief of Accident

Adopted 04/01/2003

DEN02TA100 File No. 12770	08/26/2002	Saguache, CO	Aircraft Reg No. N801HM	Time (Local): 16:30 MDT		
Make/Model:	Bell / 206L-3			Fatal	Serious	Minor/None
Engine Make/Model:	Allison / A-250-C30P		Crew	0	1	0
Aircraft Damage:	Substantial		Pass	0	0	3
Number of Engines:	1					
Operating Certificate(s):	On-demand Air Taxi; Aircraft External Load					
Type of Flight Operation:	Public Use					
Reg. Flight Conducted Under:	Public Use					
Last Depart. Point: Salida, CO			Condition of Light: Day			
Destination: Local Flight			Weather Info Src: Weather Observation Facility			
Airport Proximity: Off Airport/Airstrip			Basic Weather: Visual Conditions			
			Lowest Ceiling: None			
			Visibility: 5.00 SM			
			Wind Dir/Speed: 240 / 015 Kts			
			Temperature (°C): 28			
			Precip/Obscuration: None / None			
Pilot-in-Command	Age: 48		Flight Time (Hours)			
Certificate(s)/Rating(s)			Total All Aircraft: 9348			
Commercial; Single-engine Sea; Helicopter			Last 90 Days: 173			
Instrument Ratings			Total Make/Model: 4495			
			Total Instrument Time: UnK/Nr			

The pilot said that smoke coming from the forest fire indicated winds were from the east. He approached the fire from the north, circled in a counterclockwise direction, and began his approach to the landing zone from the west. On approach, the helicopter lost tail rotor effectiveness and spun to the right. A firefighter on the scene recorded the wind from the southwest at 15 knots, but this information was not relayed to the pilot. The helicopter was not equipped with a high altitude tail rotor kit.

Brief of Accident (Continued)

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Occurrence #1: LOSS OF CONTROL - IN FLIGHT
Phase of Operation: APPROACH - VFR PATTERN - FINAL APPROACH

Findings

1. (C) IN-FLIGHT PLANNING/DECISION - INADEQUATE - PILOT IN COMMAND
2. (C) LOSS OF TAIL ROTOR EFFECTIVENESS
3. (F) WEATHER CONDITION - CROSSWIND
4. (F) WEATHER CONDITION - TAILWIND

Occurrence #2: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH OBJECT
Phase of Operation: DESCENT - UNCONTROLLED

Findings

5. OBJECT - TREE(S)

Findings Legend: (C) = Cause, (F) = Factor

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident as follows.
the pilot's inadequate in-flight planning and decision making, and the loss of tail rotor effectiveness. A contributing factor was the right quartering tailwind.